

# DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Monday, June 25, 2001

## "My Caseworkers Were Ideal--They Had Faith in Me!"

*By Richard Anderson*

"My caseworkers were ideal--they had faith in me! They validated me! I understand there are problems, but they can also rescue a child, and give a child hope!" These are the words Barbara Feaster spoke last week at our monthly meeting with the Child Welfare Legislative Oversight Panel. We were on the agenda to present the management systems of the division.

Just prior to our presentation, the panel had offered time for legislators to speak who had supported a letter to the Governor asking for an overhaul of our division (along with some of our partners) by people from outside the division. Their presentations brought out several complaints that had been made, as well as changes needed in the way the database is used.

In the midst of these concerns (which we will be addressing in the coming months), Barbara Feaster asked to come to the table, and told her story about her experience with the division. She told of the family situation that had led to her and her sister being placed in foster care. In tears, she told her story of receiving support from two good caseworkers and excellent foster parents. Thanks to Barbara's laying of that foundation, we were able to build on that presentation, telling of the thousands of children and families who receive our services, and the many who receive the help they need, compared with those who make invalid or even valid complaints.

We had an opportunity to show the many aspects of the division's management (some on the committee are new)--including how we manage staffing, how we use data, how the budget is managed (despite difficulties), and how we prepare staff for jobs. We made three requests of the panel for consideration in the next session: increased salaries, 37 positions that would be new employee trainees without caseloads (to allow people to learn the work of the division and be ready to assume a caseload when a position is vacated, so as not to overload current staff), and a fund that could be accessed when federal funding cuts come in the middle of a state fiscal year. These three items would ease many of the "management crisis" conditions that each of us experience from time to time in the division.

Thanks to Barbara, her good caseworkers, and all our other good caseworkers and employees, we, too, have hope and validation that our work results in better lives for those we serve.

## License Expiration

*By Joelle Horel*

Copies of new Child Placing Agency (CPA) licenses have been received at the State Office. One CPA license for foster care is being mailed to each office. CPA licenses for adoption are being sent out to those who have submitted a request. If there is anyone who has not submitted a request for an adoption CPA license, please contact Mary Steck (801-538-4089) immediately as our current ones expire June 30th.

## Something Works!

*By Richard Anderson*

Recently, I was given a copy of a small booklet entitled, "The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry." This booklet was given to me, along with some other articles, by a colleague in the department who knows of our current work on the Practice Model and wanted to provide support for our efforts. Sue Ann Hammond is the author of this booklet. She is a Change Management Consultant in Plano, Texas. Here is one of the assumptions from her booklet that fits well with what I, along with many of you, experience in our efforts to continuously work at improving our organization:

**"In every society, organization, or group, something works!"**

As we continue to use a strength-based approach in our work, we will allow children, families, and each other to experience success and hope. Those with limited acquaintance with strength-based approaches may worry that problems will never be addressed. A problem-based approach leads to burnout and hopelessness. We cannot avoid the issues that cause a need for child protection. By looking for what works, we find solutions.

## To Make Your Life Easier...Using SAFE Optimally

*By Robert Lewis*

### **Foster Child Contact Information**

Tucked away at the bottom of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tab in the SAFE Placement window are three small and innocent-looking boxes containing some very important information. We hope you are not overlooking these items. These boxes provide the Division's answers to three critical questions about the specific rules and conditions under which a child in our custody may have contact with family and other persons. They answer these critical questions:

1. What are the contact arrangements for the child?
2. Who may contact the child?
3. Who may the child NOT contact?

Because of their importance, SAFE requires that these questions be completed for each current placement record. THESE STATEMENTS IN SAFE ARE THE OFFICIAL RECORD FOR CONTACT RULES FOR A FOSTER CHILD.

When you print out a TR02, to be given to foster parents or other responsible child caregivers, as a part of the Home-to-Home Packet filler information or otherwise, these rules are automatically printed on this document. This is THE method for communicating child contact rules to child caretakers.

If a foster worker is out of the office, and a supervisor needs to see what rules have been set up for contacts for a specific child, these will be found on the record for the current placement, SAFE Placement window, 2<sup>nd</sup> tab.

If some problem arises regarding relative contacts with a child in our custody, the SAFE Placement window, 2<sup>nd</sup> tab, is where administrators, auditors, review officials, attorneys, etc., will look to see what our documented rules are for such contacts.

Therefore, we hope that you can see that it is in the best interest of workers, children, and the Division that contact information in the SAFE placement record is complete, accurate, and worded in a way that we would be comfortable to have outsiders read.

Also, for your convenience, when a placement change is recorded, SAFE copies contact information from the previous placement record to the new record. It is very important that the primary worker for the SCF case makes sure that contact information rules remain accurate, complete, and up-to-date each time a placement changes.